

The Builder.

No. CLXXII.

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If you wish to *hasten*, don't *hurry*, is a sound piece of advice. Extreme haste is seldom wise, but hurry, which is precipitate, out-of-order, confusing haste, is never so. The word is derived, if we remember rightly, from the Saxon verb "to plunder," and means literally, to put into confusion. This remark is *opropos* of the Bill misnamed, one "to amend an Act for regulating the construction and use of Buildings in the metropolis," which we last week printed in full. It was drawn up in a hurry, sent to the lower House in a hurry, passed though it in a violent hurry to the Lords, and must now be sent back, or we shall be greatly surprised, to amend an error which is obvious at the first reading, to all who are acquainted with the Act itself.

In the construction of terms at the commencement of the Act, the word "surveyor" is defined "to apply to all surveyors to be appointed in pursuance of this Act;" to mean in fact, when used without any addition, the *district-surveyor*.

In the 80th section, the right of any official referee to practice as an architect (with provision not to act "as referee in the case of any building or matter in which he shall act as architect") is distinctly recognised; but he is of course prohibited from acting as a surveyor, — *id est*, a district-surveyor, "either alone or with any partner." The 95th section provides that if any person be or become "commissioner, receiver, steward, or agent, for or on behalf of any owner of houses within the limits of this Act, then such person shall not be eligible to the office either of official referee or of registrar;" and if, after being appointed, he shall become "such commissioner, receiver, steward, or agent, then he shall cease to be qualified to hold such office."

All this is perfectly straightforward, clear, and very reasonable.

Now we come to the new Bill, the third clause of which is headed, "Official referees may act as surveyors with permission of Secretary of State," the preamble of the Bill, we should say, having first set forth that by the Act, "the said official referees were prohibited from acting as surveyors" (district-surveyors), or becoming receiver, agent, &c. The first part of the clause in question, that our readers may have the matter wholly before them, is as follows:—

"And be it enacted, that notwithstanding any thing in the said recited Act to the contrary contained, it shall be lawful for one of her Majesty's principal Secretaries of State, if and so long only as he shall think proper, by any writing under his hand, to permit and authorize any one or more of the persons who for the time being may hold the office of official referee to act as surveyor, either alone or with any partner, or by an agent; and no person shall be ineligible or disqualified from holding the office of official referee by reason of his continuing to act as a surveyor with such permission as aforesaid, or by reason of his being or becoming commissioner, receiver, steward, or agent, for or on behalf of any owner of houses or land within the limits of the said recited Act, provided the fact of such person being or becoming such commissioner,

receiver, steward, or agent be notified to one of her Majesty's principal Secretaries of State, and licensed by him in writing, before such person be appointed or continue to act as official referee."

The apparent intention of the clause, therefore, is, that the official referees may be appointed district surveyors also,—a notion so monstrous, that it hardly seems necessary to say (as we confidently can) that it never entered the minds of those who framed the new Bill.

Altered, however, it must be: the public cannot safely give power to permit such preposterous union of functions to any Secretary of State, however unlikely it may be that he would avail himself of the right; and the Bill, as we have already said, must therefore go back to the Commons.

So much for what the clause says and don't mean. The real intention of it is, to authorize the appointment, as referees, of members of the profession holding the office of surveyor and agent to certain estates within the limits of the Act, and to enable referees to become stewards and agents, an intention which, on several grounds, we cannot regard favourably. Our great objection, however, is to the Bill *in limine*, as tending, beyond a doubt, to postpone the revision of the Act, and throwing additional difficulties in the way of it; although we object to *hurry*, we strongly advocate all proper *haste*, in a case where the peace and quiet of the whole metropolitan community are concerned.

The general feeling against the Act continues to increase: public meetings have been held in Marylebone, Lewisham, and elsewhere, and committees appointed to adopt such measures as may be deemed expedient for remedying the evils complained of.

In the Marylebone vestry (Dr. Spry in the chair), the subject was brought forward by Mr. Nicholas, who gave another proof in the course of his speech, in addition to the number already afforded, that it is the really unimportant and trifling parts of the Act, and the indiscretion of some few of the district surveyors, which have annoyed every one, and arrayed all London unanimously against it. The Metropolitan Buildings Act has been wrecked on pig-styes, pigeon-houses, and chimney tops.

Mr. Biers said justly, there should be no delay in their operations:—If they allowed another week to expire, the opportunity of offering any useful opposition to the Bill would be gone. It had been thought until now, that the Bill under consideration was simply and exclusively a builder's Bill; but the public were beginning to feel that the builders had really less concern in it than themselves. He should like Mr. Nicholas to move that a petition be framed, and that a deputation be appointed immediately to wait upon Sir J. Graham, to convey the sentiments of the vestry. Other parishes in the metropolis were taking up the matter, and he had been authorized by the parish of St. Martin's, in which he resided, to say, that they were most anxious to join with the Marylebone and other vestries, in a vigorous attempt to abolish the Bill.

Sir Peter Laurie wished that Lord Canning should be appealed to on the subject. Ultimately a committee was empowered to take all the necessary steps.

The meeting at Lewisham (held at the Black Horse Inn on the 16th instant), was called by public advertisement, setting forth that the Buildings Act had caused discord in all quarters of the parish, previously acting in great harmony, and calling on persons who

had felt themselves aggrieved by the conduct of the district surveyor, to forward their complaints in writing to the chairman. The meeting was very numerous and respectfully attended. Mr. Robert Harrild, of Upper Sydenham, was in the chair. Amongst other speakers, Mr. W. Hill, builder, of Greenwich, said, that being interested not only in Greenwich but Lewisham, he attended for the purpose of stating his opinion upon the iniquity of the Act. He was happy to say that in the adjoining parish of Greenwich a committee had been appointed, which was to meet that evening at half-past eight, and that having drawn up the draft of a petition, which boldly embraced the objects of the meeting, he would, with their concurrence, submit it to them. It set forth, "That the Act called the Metropolitan Buildings Act is of such a nature as to call forth from your petitioners their most unqualified disapprobation for the several reasons hereafter assigned. 1. On account of the undue interference with parochial rights. 2. The awards made by the official referees wherein those acquitted of error should be condemned in cost. 3. The fees demanded by the district surveyor. And 4. The litigious interference on the part of such district surveyors; and praying for a total repeal of the Act. It was then resolved to adopt this as a form of petition to both Houses of Parliament, and a committee of fifteen gentlemen was appointed to watch proceedings.

A subscription was proposed and liberally responded to. A number of written complaints were received, copies of which have since come into our hands; they all relate to matters of the most trifling description (pig-styes, chimney-tops, and sheds), however harassing they may have been to the parties concerned, and reflect more on the conduct of the district surveyor than on the Act.

On the same day, a meeting was held at Woolwich, when various resolutions were passed, and a petition agreed upon, praying for the total repeal of the Act. These resolutions will be found in our advertising columns.

THE FINE ARTS AND ROYAL PATRONAGE IN BAVARIA.

FROM NOTES IN AN ARTIST'S SKETCH-BOOK.

Rome, Sept. 1844. — The Italians of the present time have a considerable portion of talent, and great skill in the performance of fresco painting; several Germans have also performed works of some merit in that style, but not equal to those of Copalti, and these, as might be expected, are, however skilful in the mastery of the materials, not to compare with the great old masters. After spending the day in contemplation of Raffaele's and other magnificent works at the Vatican, I called on an artist (Fierone): he possesses two colossal heads of children, by Corregio, which struck me more forcibly with the power of fresco to give a perfect representation of nature, than any thing I had seen. Again and again I have repeatedly visited the Corregio at Fiorone's, and with increased admiration. They have been varnished, which takes from them the peculiar advantage that frescos possess of being seen in any light, but surely their depth and richness partly depend on it. Generally the frescos of Titian and Corregio excel all others in depth and rich mellow effect. A Cupid, by Domenico, in the old palace near the Torricola, or Jew's quarter, is however extremely beautiful, but Titian's St. Christopher has unequalled power.

Oct. 8th. — Arrived at Munich at 4 o'clock in the morning. Half the town exhibits a good many gabled houses of the 15th century, with carved doors, windows, and knockers, but very inferior to Neuremberg; the other portion of Munich is modern and tame, by no means splendid. In the Hoff-garden saw, under a sort of loggia, a number of frescos, much too